

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS FOR THE PURPOSE
(a) OF VALIDATING THE CURRENTLY ACCEPTED EMENDATION
"SPHENODON" OF THE GENERIC NAME "SPHAENODON" GRAY
(J.E.), 1831 AND (b) OF VALIDATING THE FAMILY-GROUP NAME
"SPHENODONTIDAE" COPE, 1870 (CLASS REPTILIA)

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The object of the present application is to ask the International Commission to use its Plenary Powers for the purpose of giving valid force to the currently accepted emendation *Sphenodon* for the generic name *Sphaenodon* Gray (J.E.), 1831. The facts of this case are set out briefly below.

2. In 1831 (*Zool. Misc.* (1) : 14), Gray (J.E.) gave the name *Sphaenodon* to the famous "Brückenechse" which he placed with the AGAMIDAE on the basis of a skull. He did not however then give a name to this species. In 1842, however, he gave this species the name *Hatteria punctata* (*Zool. Misc.* (2) : 72), thus making this nominal species the type species of *Sphaenodon* by monotypy.

3. There is no doubt that the word "Sphaenodon" is derived from the Greek word σφήν(= wedge) and that the spelling "Sphaenodon" is an error of transcription, the correct spelling being "Sphenodon". For this reason, nearly all later authors, notably Gray (1872) himself, have used the emended spelling *Sphenodon*, and the "Brückenechse" has been referred to under this name in many general works in recent years. Although I am, in general, a strong opponent of the emendation of names, I consider that in the case of the name for so well known an animal as the present it is desirable that the International Commission should validate the currently accepted form for its generic name.

4. There are two other nominal genera of which *Hatteria punctata* Gray, 1842, is the type species. The first of these is the genus *Hatteria* itself which was established by Gray on the same page (: 72) as that on which he published the name *Hatteria punctata*, which is the type species of this genus by monotypy. The second of these nominal genera is *Rhynchocephalus* Owen, 1845 (*Trans. geol. Soc. Lond.* (2)7 : 78). In his 1845 paper Owen introduced this

generic name in a very casual way and did not make it clear what was the species which he included in it. He discussed this genus again in 1853 (*Cat. Coll. Surgeons* 1 : 142, 143). The position in relation to the names *Sphenodon* and *Hatteria* was more fully discussed by Gray in 1869 (*Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (4)3 : 167). It is clear from these later papers that the type species of *Rhynchocephalus* Owen is *Hatteria punctata* Gray. Quite apart from the foregoing considerations, the generic name *Rhynchocephalus* Owen, 1845, is invalid by reason of being a junior homonym of *Rhynchocephalus* Fischer de Waldheim, 1806 (*Mém. Soc. imp. Nat. Moscou* 1 : 220). Accordingly, when the generic name *Sphenodon* Gray, 1831, is placed on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology*, its two junior objective synonyms *Hatteria* Gray, 1842, and *Rhynchocephalus* Owen, 1845, should be placed on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology*.

5. Each of the generic names discussed above has been made the basis of a family-group name, and it is desirable that the present opportunity should be taken to deal with this aspect of the present case also. First, the family-group name SPHENODONTIDAE Cope, 1870 (*Proc. amer. Ass. Adv. Sci.* 19 : 235) should now be placed on the *Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology*. Second, the family-group name RHYNCHOCEPHALIDAE Hoffmann, 1881 (*in* Bronn, *Klass. Ordn. Thierr.* 6 (Abt. 3, Lief. 18/21) : 1065) (type genus *Rhynchocephalus* Owen, 1845, a junior objective synonym of *Hatteria* Gray, 1842, and of *Sphenodon* Gray, 1831) should be placed on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Family-Group Names in Zoology*, as it is a junior objective synonym of SPHENODONTIDAE Cope, 1870.

6. We have now to consider the third of the family-group names concerned, namely HATTERIIDAE Cope, 1864 (*Proc. Acad. nat. Sci. Philad.* 1864 : 227) the type genus of which is *Hatteria* Gray, 1842, which, as shown above, is a junior objective synonym of *Sphenodon* Gray, 1831. The name SPHENODONTIDAE Cope, 1870, which is in current use for this family, is junior by six years to the name HATTERIIDAE Cope, 1864. Up to 1953, this would not have prevented the family in question from being known by the family name (SPHENODONTIDAE) based upon the oldest valid name for its type genus. Unfortunately, however, the Fourteenth International Congress of Zoology, Copenhagen, 1953, when revising the rules relating to family-group names, inserted a provision that "Where the name of the type genus of a taxon belonging to the Family-Group has to be changed because it is found to be either (i) a junior objective synonym or (ii) a junior subjective synonym, the name of the Family-Group taxon based upon the name of that type genus is not to be changed" (1953, *Copenhagen Decisions on Zoological Nomenclature* : 36, Decision 54(1)(a)). This decision represents a most unfortunate innovation and one calculated to cause much name-changing and confusion at the family-name level, and it is much to be hoped that it will be reversed by the next (London, 1958) International Congress of Zoology. In the present case this decision, if applied, would lead to the rejection of the well-known family name SPHENODONTIDAE and its replacement

by the long-rejected and inappropriate name HATTERIIDAE. In present circumstances the only way by which this result can be avoided is for the Commission to use its Plenary Powers to suppress the Family-Group name HATTERIIDAE Cope, 1864, thereby validating the accepted name SPHENODONTIDAE Cope, 1870. This course the Commission is therefore now asked to take.

7. I accordingly recommend that the International Commission should :—

(1) use its Plenary Powers :—

(a) to validate the currently accepted emendation *Sphenodon* for the generic name *Sphaenodon* Gray (J.E.), 1831 ;

(b) to suppress for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy the Family-Group name HATTERIIDAE Cope, 1864 (type genus : *Hatteria* Gray (J.E.), 1842) ;

(2) place the under-mentioned generic name on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* :—*Sphenodon* (emend. of *Sphaenodon*) Gray (J.E.), 1831 (gender : masculine) (type species, by monotypy : *Hatteria punctata* Gray, 1842) ;

(3) place the under-mentioned specific name on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* :—*punctata* Gray, 1842, as published in the combination *Hatteria punctata* (specific name of type species of *Sphenodon* Gray, 1831) ;

(4) place the under-mentioned generic name on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology* : *Sphaenodon* Gray (J.E.), 1831 (an Original Spelling rejected under the Plenary Powers under (1) above) ;

(5) place the under-mentioned family-group name on the *Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology* :—SPHENODONTIDAE Cope, 1870, *Proc. amer. Ass. Adv. Sci.* 19 : 235 (type genus : *Sphenodon* (emend. of *Sphaenodon*) Gray (J.E.), 1831).

(6) place the under-mentioned Family-Group names on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Family-Group Names in Zoology* :—

(a) HATTERIIDAE Cope, 1864 (type genus : *Hatteria* Gray (J.E.), 1842, as suppressed under the Plenary Powers under (1)(b) above) ;

(b) RHYNCHOCEPHALIDAE Hoffmann, 1881 (type genus : *Rhynchocephalus* Owen, 1845) (invalid because a junior synonym of SPHENODONTIDAE Cope, 1870, the names of the respective type genera of these family-groups being objective synonyms of another).